M.Morris

English 109

Werry

A Novel (Science Fiction Type)

~~Sex, Shamrocks, and Saucers~~

~~C.D. Mc Gee~~

Chapter one

~~Like Meets Like~~

'Lou Diarmuid stretched, yawned, and lit a cigarette before he turned in his seat to face his companion.

"Brother, but I'm just about fissioned off on this assignment. How about you, baby?"

"And how! I've had it, but good. But what are we gonna do? We've got three more of these damned trips to make before we get a break and are given a relief. I'm so fed up with the same scenery that I could heave every time I look at it. Wish to ~~Hell~~ we could take a detour!"

"Why not? Who's to stop us? We got plenty of time before we're due back. You got a good idea there, ~~baby~~. Any place in particular you want to see?" Lou looked over at baby who leaned back in her seat and thought about it.

"Well now, let's pick a spot that's different from our scouting area. I'm so sick of looking at yellow ~~sand~~ that It's not funny."

"~~You and me both!~~ What say we drop in on one of those green islands we passed over? At least it's a contrast."

"O.K. by me. Set ' er down when you re ready." The girl lit a cigarette while she waited. The pilot reached over to push a few buttons on the ~~dashboard~~ in front of him.

"No use raising sand with the natives when we do land. Might as well make this crate invisible now. You know how funny these ~~native~~ characters get when they see something different. A ship like ours

would really panic them. So would we for that matter."

"Can't see why?" argued the girl, "We're the same as them except for one or two points."

" Yeah, but it's those 'one or two points' that would get the natives all riled up. While we' re at it, we might as well pull a fadeout too. Here, Tari, do a disappearing act for me!" Lou tooked a small tube from his pocket and tossed it on her lap. She squirted herself with it until she became invisible. Then she handed it back to him and he did likewise. As they were about to land, he dimmed the cabin lights and nothing could be seen except the red tips of their cigarettes.

"Well, that's done. As far as anyone down there is concerned, we're non-existant because they can't see us. Boy, what a bunch of dopes! Anything they can't see, they don't believe in. I've even heard they don't believe in a lot of things that they do see."

"How about that? Must be some real brains on this planet. Too bad they don't use them. Say, Lou, hurry up and land this crate! I'm hungry. Maybe they got some good eats down there."

"What the Hell, sweetie, you getting too high hat for the nourishment wafers in our kits. Don't you care for their tasty flavor?"

"Ha, ha, big joke. You know damn well those things are tasteless. If you're trying to be funny, you're way off your orbit. Quit being corny and land this thing. I'm starved!"

"O,K., O.K. quit your bitching. What do you want me to do, crack 'er up on a rock? God, woman, but you do get hot when you're hungry. Whatsa matter? Got a tapeworm?"

"Huh, It should be so simple!" Tari's voice was as warm as the hot tip of her cigarette. She let him know she was peeved by puffing hard and blowing the smoke in his direction. He couldn't see her face and it was just as well. She could throw daggers when she was mad.

He dropped the argument and landed the ship. Women might be hard to handle but not that ship. ~~It~~ She was ~~his~~ a sweetheart ~~baby~~. She responded to the lightest

Touch

and landed as easy as a feather on cream.He pushed another button and smoked several more cigarettes as the cabin became pressurized. Tari made no other sound than her breathing.

"O.K.So she's mad.So what? Let her stew a little.If I hurt her feelings it's just tough." When the double knobbed door clicked,indicating the equalization of the cabin's pressure to the outside atmosphere,Lou left his bucket shaped seat and opened the hatch.

"Hey,Tari,It's not bad out here.Nice green grass,running water and plenty of fresh air.Makes for a fine comfort stop. Everything but the plumbing fixtures. Get a move on,girl,and we'll see if there are any resturants open."

Her reply was short and teary." Go take a leak by yourself and drown in it. You can look around alone and you needn't hurry back. I'll stay here with the cigarette smoke.It's better company than you."

"Well,feature that! What in space is wrong with you,woman. What'd I do to bring this bucket full of crap on my head?"

"Plenty,You been throwing it on thick yourself. I suppose you think I don't have feelings. I can take just so much crap myself, before I start slinging it back. Go away,I'm sick enough without taking any more from you."

Lou turned from the hatchway with a muttered curse."God damn it. What can you do with a woman like that? Might as well apologize before she bawls her head off." He sat down beside her and took her invisible hands in his."O.K. sweetie, so I'm sorry. I didn't mean to fission off at you like this. I didn' t mean for my cracks to hit the wrong force line. I apologize.Do you forgive me or should I kill myself to make you feel better? And what do you mean by saying you re sick"

"Thanks but you're more value to me alive.Maybe I was a little off center myself,but when I get hungry,I get mean and from now on I'm going to get hungrier. I should think you'd have seen why by now. If

you paid as much attention to me as to the buttons on that panel dash, you'd have seen why I'm not feeling so hot, ~~lately~~. After all, it's pretty obvious by now and half the credit goes to you."

"Credit for what?"

"Oh, come now, boy; Can't you guess? You've been working on the project hard enough."

As the lights went on, Lou leaned back in his seat and whistled. "Well hurray for me! So I finally hit the right reaction chamber! It sure took long enough! I was beginning to wonder if we were going to end up negative."

"Well now that you know, are you happy?"

"Hell yes! I was hoping you'd see it my way for a long time. Baby, you don't know how glad I am to get this little thing taken care of!" Lou reached back into his pocket and brought out a ring that he fumbled onto her invisible third finger left hand. "Baby it gives me a real kick to proclaim you, Tariin Nuchabar, as the legal and highly regarded wife of myself, Lughaid Diarmuid, with this ring as our token of mating. Signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of ourselves, the ~~Almighty Spirit~~, and whatever unseen life forms that may be peeking in at us, according to the latest marriage legislation of our home territory, Tara, and the custom of our race, the Lupies."

"The what?"

"The Lupies. You know, short for Lupercorpon, What we used to call ourselves before the lingo got modernized. Come on, honey, now that its legal, let's seal it with a hot pucker." He reached over for her and pulled the cigarette from her mouth, replacing it with his lips. She did likewise and they simmered together in pleasant passion for several moments. Tari came up for air first. "Well, that's more like it. Even though I can't see the lovelight in your eyes, I know its there by that torchy kiss."

She broke away from him and went to the open hatch. "Now that I'm an honest woman, let's see if we can find something edible so we can celebrate with a wedding supper."

He took the hint and joined her as she stepped from the cabin. The ship was put back into a state of invisibility as soon as Lou pushed a button that closed the hatch and concealed the interior of the cabin. He marked its location by breaking a stick off a bush and scratching an X on the ground in front of the unseen hatchway. Then the two newly weds scouted for food.

"Don't think we'll find any resturaunts open this time of day. Too late for the tea rooms and too early for the nightclubs."

Tari laughed," Fine chance we got of finding bright lights and good liquor in this God forsaken green wilderness. Guess we'll have to go back to nature. See any berries or small slow-moving animals that look edible?"

"Sorry gal, but I didn't bring my automatic barbeque this trip. We'll have to stick to what grows on bushes, unless you like your meat raw."

"You're all the raw meat I can take right now, boy. Just so you have your vegetation analyizer handy. Don't want to get poisened on my wedding day. You wouldn't have much fun claiming a bride right from a stiff, would you now?"

"Hardly, baby, but don't worry. I'm in no hurry to hit zero from acute indigestion either. The analyizer is right with me, in my hip pocket. As soon as we see any juicy berries, I'll put it to the purpose for which it was invented." He didn't have long to wait, for they found a small berry-heavy bush a few paces from the ship. The analyizer gave it a clean bill of health and the couple got down to business and gave employment to their digestive juices. Lou watched in amazemant as Tari's invisible hand kept picking the berries and popping them into her mouth. The bush was stripped before she was satisfied.

"God, woman, don't you know when to quit? You must have a real mess of berries in your ration receiver. Hope they don't give you a bellyache."

"Quit your griping. Whatsa matter? Can't you stand a woman with a good appetite? Better get used to it from now on in, because I've got a bellyfull of something else besides berries and it's going to take a heap of stoking to keep this incubating chamber tuned up to the right radiation level. Face it, Lover, You helped set the reactor in motion. Now you'll have to take the consequences. Too bad I haven t regained full visibliity, because as soon as you can see that part of me, you'd know that Ithe pile is really picking up energy. You might even see it kick up its heels."

"Honest? You mean you're really that far along. Honey, this is one secret you really kept good. Will it show enough for me to strut you in front of the boys when we get back home? Boy, will I be glad to shut them up. What a ~~radioactive~~ razzing I've been taking from them, because they thought you hadn't caught on. Some of those dopes even insinuated that I wasn't your one and only and you were staying negative because we weren't riding the same line of force and you were thinking of playing a new field."

Tari laughed at his fears. "Darling, they were really on the wrong orbit with that guess. I took my time because I wanted to make sure. I've already notified the medical officer and applied for leave when it's due. Now that I'm committed, don't make me sorry."

"Don't worry about that. Now that I know what's causing you to blow your ~~lots~~, I'll be on my best behavior. You do the same and take good care of yourself. Wouldn't want you to go off center and ruin that chamber now that it's reacting. I still can t believe it. Come over here and let me feel it to make sure."

~~The girl complied~~ and she and Lou decided to climax the wedding supper with dessert. They had lost most of their invisibility and he could see she spoke the truth as they stripped down, ~~to get the best performance from their purring engines~~. Tari snuggled close to him and pressed his hand against the soft flesh of her belly so that he felt the hard lump under it.

" There,darling,is the result of our joint project. It's small now but in no time it'll really mushroom out.Honest,you are some boy, to make me want to ride the same line of force with you for life.I'd never have let my Battery charge take your if I didn t really love you. So now that you've got me,you're stuck, Sorry?"

"Let me show you how sorry I am-" Lou showed her how sorry he was by pulling her against him and setting up a chain reaction that soon fissioned them both into a sound and satisfied sleep. The bride right had been claimed with flying sparks. Some time later he woke up,stretched and raised himself on an elbow as he gazed down at his sleeping wife. The sun was setting and its slanting rays shot flaming glints into her copper red hair. Just looking at her was enough to raise his radiation level back to the critical stage. She was really one high powered craft.Beautiful as well as manuverable. As fine a ship as in the fleet and all woman to boot.He wondered how he had been lucky enough to get her in his magnetic field and keep her there. A few damp tendrils of short curly hair lay against her slim throat.Her small face with its well defined features was half buried in one firm round arm, while the other was crooked above her head.Her body was stretched out in a relaxed position and Lou enjoyed the scene it presented. Tari's legs were perfect underpinnings for her sexy and well assembled chassis. Even the bulge of pregnancy failed to jar its lines. If anything, it gave her maturity and added to her beauty. The small cupped breasts were already beginning to swell in preparation for motherhood. That baby was going to be lucky,Too bad he d be too young to appreciate his mother's talents. Lou stared at his wife's longlashed sleep-closed eyes as if to will them open. They were the color of the emerald wedding band and matched its sparkle. She had a smile to go with them that outdid the dentifrice adds.,and he wanted to see it. Almost as if under a command,Tari stirred and opened them and smiled at him, Then sat up, and stretched herself awake, and reached

over to squeeze his hand and hold it against her cheek. It almost startled the reactor back into activity but Lou thought better of it and forced himself to keep it at negative. After all, there was no use overdoing a thing. Now that she was incubating there was no use endangering the baby. Plenty of time for fissioning when the critical stage was passed, ~~too much activity too soon might damage the reaction chamber~~. They could wait a few more hours. A cooling off period never hurt anybody. Besides it was getting dark and if they wanted to do any scouting, they'd better hurry He pulled his hand from hers and gave his orders.

"OK Baby, That's enough for now. We better get energized and moving if we expect to do any scouting before dark."

She took the order and started to dress. There would be time for fun later. Besides she was chilly. As they dressed, Tari admired her husband. Her reaction to him was as positive as his to her. He was all man. The best and smoothest ship in port, what manuverability and power! There wasn't another man on Tara who had Lou's drive or good looks. He was as trim a craft to look at as he was a powerful one in propulsion. ~~His back was straight, his shoulders broad, and his face handsome~~. He was as ~~fine~~ perfect a specimen of manhood as could be found and would make the baby a fine father. She hoped he would have Lou's blond hair and blue eyes. She was glad it was going to be a boy. He would have good reason to brag and strut when they reported back to the base. She had done some bragging herself. She felt that he was the finest husband any woman could want, but God help any woman, besides herself, who should want him or try to get him from her. Tari would send her to zero fast.

While he was fastening his boots, Lou bent over to examine something on the ground. He broke Tari's thought train by calling her to see it.

"Hey, Copper top, come over and see what I've found!"

She went over and inspected his discovery. "Well, look at this! I'll be a ~~negative charge~~ fissionator if it isn't the twin of our own Zemrag. What's

it doing here?" They stared down at a group of small three leafed plants scattered among the grass.

"It sure is the seamrag. Just like at home. How in ~~space~~ the galaxies did it get here in this wilderness? It's just like finding a an old buddy in a ~~foreign spaceport~~ alien atmosphere."

"Maybe they're as common to this place as to Tara. Maybe they grow here as they do back home."

"Then how come there's been no report of finding them here? Our scouts have been cruising this planet for some time now and nobody's mentioned finding the seamrag on any of their missions."

"Oh Lou, don't get so revved up about it! Don't you remember that this place is under the observation of another group of explorers, the scouts from Danaan. They may have reported it a long time ago, but we haven't paid much attention to their meetings, We missed several and they might have reported the seamrag at one of them."

Lou calmed down. "Sorry, honey, I forgot all about the Danaans. They're in on this deal as much as we are, even more so because they mingle right with the natives."

"What nerve they've got! From the tales they bring back, it must take guts to live among the wierdies down here. Some of their customs and habits would set us off our forcelines but good. At least from what the Danaans say."

Lou was doubtful. "Listen, baby, don't fall for ~~what~~ everything the Danaans tell you. You know how they love to sling the blarney. They'd tell you anything as long as it made for fine talk over a shotglass. It would just about kill a Danaan to report the news straight. No one at our conferences believe half of their reports."

"Even so, if only a fraction of what they say is true, the aborgines down here still practice customs that are plenty queer to us."

Lou didn't disagree and the conversation lagged as they walked.

It was still light and as they were visible, they wondered if they should do another disappearing act. Lou was against it.

"Sweetheart,it's not like walking in the unprotected desert terrain of our assignment. There are plenty of bushes that we could duck behind if a native came along. Nobody'll see us.We're safe enough without doing another fadeout.This planet's satellite will soon be rising, and on a clear night like this,it'll give me a positive and high powered charge to see you walking beside me with the moonbeams in your hair. You look too good to me,kid,to have you an invisible shadow unless its in the line of duty."

"Why,lover lad,I didn't think you noticed.Talk about the blarney slinging Danaans,you're not so bad yourself and without a jag on either. Keep that kinda talk up and I'll think you've got an attraction for me." Tari kidded him along,but she was flattered just the same and intended to do everything in her orbit to keep his reactor tuned to her radiations waves. Suddenly her attitude became alert and she signaled an alarm.

"Hey,boy,listen to that! Let's fade away fast.Comes along natives. Hear em?"

He did and just as they got behind a bush,the voices' owners came insight. Lou and Tari were startled when they saw them.

"Great cosmic particles,feature them!"Lou turned to Tari,"I thought you said the Lupies weren't doin' any exploring around this terrain.Those two don't look like Danaans and they sure can't be natives. Do you think they're some of our scouts who got lost on assignment and may have been forced down here by a fault zone?"

"UH,uh,"said Tari,"no fault zones around here to force them down."

"You're right.Besides they're not in uniform and they're overage. They look too much at him,too,to be lost space scouts. Seem to be very happy with their surroundings.None of our people would be as happy looking as they are,if they were stuck in this prehistoric swamp. Let's listen to them and see if they're intelligent enough to attempt communicating with."

The newcomers stopped near their bush, and after several minutes of listening, Lou, who was a good linguist, managed to make out enough of their conversation to get a grasp of the language. He was surprised that he could.

"Well, believe it or not, honey, these characters actually speak a lango that's similar to one of Tara's obsolete tongues. If we tune in sharp enough, we should be able to make and maintain a speaking connection with them. Let's try, anyway."

Lou whistled to draw their attention, and he and Tari stepped from their hidaway and greeted them with an ancient salute.

"Cead millethe! Hi there friends, how about a handshake?"

The older couple were startled at the sudden meeting, but seemed glad to see them and accepted their hands in friendship. It took awhile to understand each other but they were patient with one another's language differences and soon established a reasonable contact. The other two introduced themselves as Gormac and Morna Echbre. Gormac was puzzled by the scouts' manners and appearance.

"Sure but you seem to be new around here. We know almost everyone of us who lives in these parts but we've never seen you before, nor have we ever seen clothes such as yours. Where ye from? Be ye outlanders?"

"Outlanders? I don't get you, Mac."

"Are ye from another place, a land outside this island?"

"I hope to God, we are! You can bet your life that we're not natives. We come from one Hellava ways from here."

"Is it Bavaria? We've heard that there are our kind in the Black Forest of Germany!"

"Germany, never heard of it." said Tari. "Somplace closeby here?"

"Well, hardly," said the woman, Morna. "Germany is across the Channel in Europe."

"Channel, Europe, what are they?"

"Ye do not know? Why, the Channel is the water that separates these islands from the continent of Europe and Germany is a country in Europe.

Have ye never heard of them? Are ye from America,then,or Asia,or Africa? We did not know that our kind lived there?"

"Asia,Africa,America! What queer sounding names.They sure register zero on my indicator but maybe Tari and I've flown over them."

"Flown over them!Do you mean in an airship?"Gormac and Morna's eyes got wide as they stared at the young couple.

Tari glared at Lou,"You and your big mouth.Why did you have to blow your jets like that? Now what will you tell 'em? The truth may blast them right off into a sand raising panic/?"

"Oh,what the devil,it's a chance I'll have to take.If they know this much, they might as well be given the full charge.Their reaction might make an interesting report at the home base."

Lou put his arm around the older man's shoulders and said."Come on,Mac,old boy.Take us to a place with a high security rating.I've got a tale to tell that may sizzle your brain cells."

Much later,as the moonbeams played on Tari's hair and on the ripples of the brook, Lou finished his story.He and Tari sat back and waited for the others' reaction. Gormac and Morna both were slack jawed.Gormac stared up at the stars and swallowed several times before he spoke."Heavenly harps and low flyin' angels,so that's the truth behind the many strange tales of the origin of our race.Now it's clear to see why we are different from others in this land."

"What about the others,have you ever messed around with them?"

"Not in our time,Loueen,but the tales tell of the days when we lived more openly among them.Whether or not they be true,I cannot say,but as the stories go,we once got on well enough with them,til they started blamin us for misfortunes that befell them.Because of our natural high spirits and love of fun,they accused our people of playin' tricks on them and got suspicious and hostile to us.That's when we thought it best to leave their company and keep to ourselves."

"The tales must ring true,Gormac,"interrupted his wife,"For even today there are seen many among the others with the mark of our race upon their features,"

"Since you've quit fooling around with the wierdies down here, I take it your negative to their customs and habits." Said Tari.

"Oh, no lass, not at all. We're plenty hep to them. We see them often enough to keep tab on their comings and goings, but they seldom latch on to us. When they do, they put the sight of it down to imagination or the partakin of too many liquid spirits, a habit for which these natives are famous. There's one though, as saw an spoke to me years ago. It's glad I was to see him, too, for he saved me life, an him but a child at the time. Fact is, I still see him, though he don't know it. He's now near middle age and every week for years, he and his woman have walked through this very meadow and sat on that rock, nearly close enough for us to touch. Tis through their talk that we've learned of the news of the outside world."

"And what is the state of current event on this platoid sphere, Mac? Give out with it. We'd like to take an account of it back home. It would up our efficiency ratings no little to be the bearers of such info." Lou and Tari were both eager to hear Gormac's newscast, for their efficiency records could stand a boost. Gormac sighed and wiped a tear from his eye before he delivered.

"Ah, There is sad news tonight and every night from what I hear! Many are the reports of wars, floods, disasters, ill feelings and bad weather going on around and about this large planet. To hear the talk, there is much trouble and bitterness all over, and this fair island has seen more than her share of unpleasant such. For many years this lovely land has been writhing under the heavy heel of a conqueror. And many injustices that have been imposed upon her citizens, who are a fine people for all their eccentricites. I love this country with all me heart, friends, an no matter what the homeland of me ancestors was, this island is me true love and I d give up me favorite poteen makin' formula to be able to help her regain her past glories. Ah, if only I had the power to settle past injustices." Gormac wiped away another tear.

"What injustices, Mac?" Lou was curious.

"Among others, the one that's divided this fair land from it's mother country.

That is the one that's causing much grief to me friend and his lady. If I had the power to settle it, I would, for it'd be but a small payment for the act of myself when he saved me life after I had fallen into a bog hole, those many years ago. That day I promised him I'd grant his fondest wish, an it grieves me not to be able to do it, for his fondest wish is to see his country united. Gormac sighed again, then as an idea hit him, he looked at Lou.

"Say lad, that reminds me, what was it ye said about bein' able to make yerselves and yer ship invisible and what was it about the sleep gas? We used to be able to become invisible and put others under sleepin' spells, but in recent times we seem to have lost the power."

Lou grinned. "I doubt if you've lost the power. It would be closer to the right forceline, to say that you've lost the formula for the equipment that gives such power. It's a formula and a science that the Lupies have just regained." Then he went into more detail, explaining to Gormac that each space scout was equipped with a light ray bending device, and invisibility spray, and a sleep gas dispenser. Since they didn't carry lethal weapons, they protected themselves by these methods. Gormac received this information and went into a brooding silence. Something was on his mind and his attention meter gave it top priority.

While he brooded, Tari and Morna discussed obstetrics and pediatrics. As soon as communication had been established, Morna sized up Tari's curves and realized that she was in need of the advice of an older more experienced hand in the field of maternal relations. Morna had several grown children and was a strong advocate of natural childbirth and strong disciplinary methods. Tari preferred the comforts of a scientifically anesthitized labor and a self demand schedule but she listened to the self styled voice of experience with as much politness as she could muster although her thoughts were on another forceline. "Say what you will, grandma, but you're just wasting your breath. When it comes to that subject you're on the wrong screen for my blips. When the time comes, I'll take care of my baby in my way. Thank God, you're not my mother-in-law, for there'd be flying sparks."

Between the stork session of the women and the sudden silence of Gormac, Lou soon got bored and anxious to return home. He was somewhat fissioned off at Gormac for his disinterest and felt that they were no longer welcome. He ended the women's conversation with an order to Tari.

"Come along now, gal, enough baby talk. Let's get going. I feel the need to return to more civilized territory. This green wilderness has got me down, I wanta see some bright lights and intelligent faces. Besides we'll be overdue if we stick around here much longer. No use to let them think we've hit zero."

The sight of the younger couple's departure shocked Gormac out of his reverie and he ran after them shouting that they couldn't leave so soon, he would have none of it. It would be an insult to his hospitality. They must stay for refreshments and more talk. He had a plan he wanted them to hear. The mention of food brought the scouts back. The berries had not hit the spot and it was a long ride home. The brass back home could worry over them. The report they gave would make up for any tardiness. Over the remains of a good meal and a glass of special occasion homebrew, Gormac told them of his plan to bring happiness to his friend and justice to his country.

It was a well organized plan that needed only the tools at Lou and Tari's disposal to make it a success. Lou and Tari were not hot on the idea because it was too radical for them to accept at first. It had political implications and might get them in trouble with their superiors.

"Sorry, Mac, old boy, sounds like a great scheme, but it s not for us. The brass back home told us not to mess around with politics down here. Your plan is overactive with political particles." Gormac disagreed.

"Politics, indeed! It's the rightin' of a great wrong I'm after doin' if you'll help me."

"We pick up your blip, Gormac, but this isn't on our screen."

"The divil it isn't, Tari me girl, for tis yer own people yer refusin' to help. The blood of these people and our race has been well mixed, though they may not be aware of it.

The minglin' may have taken place centuries ago, but the strain is there, stamped hard upon the faces and forms of many of these natives. You've only to observe some of them awhile to see for yourselves that I speak true. Why, do you know that if you help the people of this land, you'll please the whole world, for the seed of our race is to be found in all parts of this planet. How kin you not want to help? You should be ashamed of your hardheartedness."

"Oh, Mac, now you are overriding your charge, Surely these people aren't found all over the face of this solar body satellite?" Lou didn't believe it.

Gormac insisted that he was right. "Indeed they are. Let me tell you! The history of this country bein what it is, with so much bitterness in it, many of its people fled to other lands, where their descendents are livin today. They all hold a tender place in their hearts for this island, though, no matter how far they are away from it. You've only to hear their songs and stories to know that this is so."

"Oh, yeah, how do you know? If you've never been far from this bog, where do you get all this dope?" Tari didn't believe him either.

"As I told you before, colleen, I hear the talk of those who linger near to pass the time o' day. Especially my friend and his sweetheart who come here every week. If you would be so kind as to stick around a little longer, you d be able to hear them too, for they will shortly be makin their usual appearance."

Lou and Tari thought about it for a miniute, then gave their decision. Lou said, "Well, fella, since you are raising so much sand about this liberation deal, you have alerted our natural inquisitiveness and we could never get back on the beam if we didn't satisfy our curiosity about this character and his desire to free his homeland from bondage. Besides I hear voices and it would not do for natives such as them to see us. We'll stick around until after they leave then we ll give you our verdict."

The subjects of their debate were almost at their meeting rock, so all conversation was suspended to keep their hiding place safe from detection and to be able to hear every word of the argument that was in full swing as the native couple neared their trysting rock.

Chapter Two

A Rebel Hits the Critical Level

A man and woman stood near Gormac's rock talking in a language similar to his and in tones that came close to a shout. It was easy for the eavesdroppers to understand the theme of the argument. It would have been easy for them to grasp if they had been an American city block from the rock instead of only a few paces. Lou poked Tari and whispered, "Wow, listen to the blasts that chain reaction is setting off! Wonder what's corroding them? From the expression on that female native's face, she must be spitting acid at her boy friend."

"Shh," warned Gormac, "Let's not miss a word. From the sounds of it, here's a fine example of a native lovers' quarrel and I'm willin' to bet that the liberation issue is in back of it. They always get hot on that subject."

As the spat progressed, it became obvious that Gormac was right. This was a lovers' quarrel with patriotic overtones.

"Kathy, you cannot leave me this way! You cannot desert me or the cause like this! What will I do without you?"

"You'll do the same as you've been doing all this time. You'll keep on writing those blistering editorials in your paper. You'll keep right on spending several days a month in a jail cell for the seditious tone of those editorials and then you'll come out of jail only to continue writing them. The Voice of the Harp will keep right on harpin' away at the British Parliament, but I'll not be here to listen to it or to you, with all your long winded blather about the 'Holy cause of the vote on Partition' and the vow you made your father, a vow that's makin' me an old maid. I'm sick an' tired of waiting for the 'Day of the Vote' to come so you can marry me. As far as I'm

concerned, the Day of Judgement will come sooner and I m not waiting that long. I'm forty years old,Keenan O' Donnel, and for twenty of those forty years, I've been waiting for you to put the ring on my finger. Forty is too old to be a virgin. If you cannot take me as your wife, because of that blasted oath, at least take me as your woman."

"Katie, you know I can't do that. I love you too much to degrade you. If I cannot have you as my wife,I'll have you not at all. Don't you think that I'm not dufferin' even more than you, because of that vow? Many's the time,I've been on the verge of losin' my self control and taking you in sin, but each time I've been stopped by the vision of me father's face,God rest his soul,and the memory of his dyin' words. 'Take not a woman in marriage,lad,til the fairest of them all,Kathleen ni Houlihan, has been freed from the bloody bonds of slavery.' And I know that in his heart he meant,' take not a woman in marriage or otherwise' I was just too young at the time for him to go into detail." He sighed. "I'm sorry,Katie, but if this is your ultamatum, I'll have to let you go. What do you intend to do, if you leave the North country? Where do you intend to go, surely not to England?" The very thought edged his voice.

"England,indeed,that would be jumping from the bog into the quicksand. No, my love, I'm going to the land of opportunity, reasonable taxes, and high employment security,the land of the Lady of the Lamp,the United States of North America. I have been reading in the American nursing magazines that there are many fine positions open for the followers of another Lady of the Lamp, Miss Nightengale, who would rise from her grave and dance a jig for joy if she could see how highly regarded nurses are in the States. They are so much in demand today that foreign nurses just immigrated,who can barely speak English, are hired as soon as they can prove their ability with a bedpan or a hypodermic needle. I have

Chapter Two (Cont.)

too much skill to be wasting it under British domination. I m going to a place where it will be appreciated, a place where a week s wages are better than a month's salary here, even after tax deductions. I'm leavin' next week, so this is our last meetin'. While I'm gone, if you should change your mind, here's the address by which you can reach me. I'M givin' you a year to choose between us, Kathleen ni Houlihan the country, or Kathleen O' Halloran the woman. And I can tell you now, that the warmth of my body against yours will be much more satisfying than the feel of the damp Irish soil next to your back." She handed him a piece of paper, turned and walked away.

He started to run after her, but stopped and went back to the rock. He sat down on it, and the paper slipped to the ground. Keenan kicked at it, then groaned. The moon's glow showed tears on his face as he looked up at it and cursed his luck.

"God Almighty," he thought, "How could she do this to me? A year, Hell, it might as well be a hundred for all the good it would do our marriage plans. England won't let the six counties of Northern Ireland have the vote in a year or in ten years. Is it worth the denial of my manhood's wants?"

Then the memory of that ugly day in an Easter week long past became as clear in his mind as a scene from a tri-dimensional technicolor movie. It was so near to him that he could see it reenacted in the lunar rays that fell on the meadow, hear again his mother's scream and see the look on her face as Cahal O' Halloran carried her husband in from the battleground of a barricaded street in Dublin. He would never forget the pain in his father's eyes, his whitened face, his reddened proudfleshed bullet-ripped belly. Proudly that English bullet had ripped into it. Or the smell of the moldiness of the basement, the feel of the damp sheet on the cot where he died. He could hear his father's voice growing weak as he begged his son not to give up the

fight. He could see the smile on his face as Keenan made that promise, only a few moments before his father went into death, a long sleep of death.

Keenan thought of his own life after that. His mother had died years before her time from the effects of hard and menial labor far above her strength. Both she and Kathy's mother died young that way. Mrs. O'Halloran never saw her husband after he was carted off to prison and executed for his part in the Rebellion. She died without even learning where he was buried, but at least Bridget and Padraic O'Donnel lay near each other in graves not far from this meadow. Graves that their son tended carefully to keep the shamrocks free from weeds. They were unmarked by headstones, but each Easter Week Keenan draped them with the flag of the Free State to let it be known that the spirit of the Irish rebel had not died with them but lived on. They had instilled that spirit in him when he was very young and it grew as he grew. He was taught to love Ireland and freedom and to hate Britain and imperialism as some children were taught to love God and Heaven and hate sin and the Devil.

The lullabyes Keenan's parents sang to him were Gaelic love songs and ballads. The stories they told him were not the fairy tales of Mother Goose but the folklore of Ireland. He did not hear stories of fairytale princes and princesses and knights in armor; he learned of the fairyland of the little people, the leprechaun, who were said to live in the green dells and underground caves of the back country and bog lands. He learned of the stories and songs of the old bards and poets, who once roamed Ireland and his marvelled at the wonderful tales of ancient warrior chieftains.

His heroes had been the warriors of the elite guard of ancient Erin, the Fianna. Keenan and his friends had played at being its leaders, Fionn Mac Cool, Cool Mac Art, Gol the mighty, Diarmuid of the Love Spot, Oisin the Bard, Caoilte, Conan, Cormac and others of a band of men who once lived as mortals but became legend endowed with abilities that would

make Superman and Buck Rogers look like Boy Scouts. One of Keenan's happiest daydreams was the one in which he became the reincarnation of Finn, who rose from his burial mound to avenge Ireland by engaging St. George of England in a battle to the death. In this dream he slew St. George by sneaking up on him,while he was fighting the dragon,and cutting off his head with one blow of a sword,which had the combined properties of Excalibur and a magic wand.He had no qualms about striking St. George while his back was turned; it was as good a way to kill an Englishman as any other. After he finished St. George, the sword became a magic wand and with it,the great Keenan O' Finn tamed the dragon,mounted him and rode,in triumph,on his back to London where the dragon marched on Parliament and slew all in his path with the liquifying heat from his flaming tongues. It was his favorite dream, but as he grew older, Keenan realized that he would have to resort to other methods to defy England. He decided to become a writer, and worked hard to earn his schooling fees and save the money to buy the Gaelic language newspaper,Voice of the Harp,from its indifferent owner. He remembered how hard he and his staff worked to make that voice heard, how it had played upon the taut heartstrings of rebelly minded North Irishmen. The many days its editor spent in jail were a sure sign that the voice was being heard and was giving the British some fear twinges against the coming of another uprising. Well,they had plenty to be afraid of if O'Donnel's kind had anything to do with the matter. He knew that friends in the IRA had secret caches of firearms in strategic spots throughout the North Country. He knew the location of every one in Belfast and they were many.

~~Though Keenan hated the idea of another~~

Though Keenan hated the idea of another open rebellion, he knew that if Parliament continued to refuse them the vote, the day would surely come when Irish and English blood would again be shed in a new fight for freedom. He would be glad to die in battle as his father had done, but this was not what he wanted. He wanted a diplomatic victory in a war of words and not bullets. He wanted the British to come to terms in Parliament and not on a battleground, but now he was beginning to think that his cause was hopeless. Only force would get results and the IRA did not have that much strength. This was not a time for open warfare, it would only be Easter Week all over again. Kathy saw this and gave up the battle. Maybe he should too, but if he did his father's sacrifice would be wasted and he would never be able to face him in Heaven. No, Kathy might give up the battle but he wouldn't, no matter what the cost to his manhood. Padraic O'Donnel had paid a much higher price out of his love for Dark Rosaleen and his son, Keenan, would cast his seed upon Dark Rosaleen's soil before he would break his vow and put it into the body of a woman.

"God in Heaven," he prayed aloud, "Surely you, who once sent your Angels to Erin, will again look upon us with favor and send help from Heaven to aid us in our fight. If ever Ireland needed the help of angels, it's now, when Britain is clinging tightest to the possessions that are closest to her. She'll never let loose of the six North Counties unless the Heavens send an angel down to show her the light of Ireland's Holy cause. Oh God, if you've any to spare, please lend one to us to guide our way!"

Keenan ended his prayer and left the meadow. As soon as he was out of sight, the eavesdroppers left their shelter and sat on the rock, where Gormac continued the argument for aid to Ireland. He had a good argument too, and he made the best of it by taking his listeners on a verbal trip through Irish history. If Gormac had had a time machine and had been able to take his visitors to the scene of each historic event as it